

CLASSIFICATION SECRET/CONTROL - U.S. OFFICIALS ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Albania

SUBJECT Activities of the Soviet Petroleum
 Mission to Albania

PLACE
ACQUIRED

DATE OF INFO

50X1-HUM

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1. Among the several Soviet missions now in Albania, the largest non-military mission is the petroleum mission which previously formed part of the technological mission under Professor Tarchomin. It was at the beginning of November 1948 that Chuvashin, the Soviet Minister, notified the Albanian Government that in the future the petroleum and fuels mission would be an independent mission.
2. The head of this mission is Engineer Vsevolod A. Kurakin, an official of "NEFTPROM", Moscow.
3. Originally fixed at nine, the strength of the mission was increased during December 1948 and early January 1949 to 69, most of whom arrived directly from the USSR, Bulgaria and the Soviet Zones of Germany and Austria. The latter include 17 survey specialists who arrived by special plane from Lwow.
4. The mission has offices in the Rue Elbasan and the Rue Skanderbeg (which houses the headquarters of the mission) and has district offices at Kucove, Durres and Shkoder.
5. The Kucove and Durres branch offices are chiefly engaged in the setting up of new fuel dumps.
6. The team of surveyors is divided into two parties. The first, under Vassilutin, is carrying out surveys in the Murris-Salce area (northwest of the Kucove wells) while the second, under Nikitenko, is located at Elbasan where investigation has indicated the existence of a natural gas field. (Calorific content is estimated at 18,500 calories per cubic meter.)
7. Whereas Elbasan would become the center of Albania's methane production should the above field prove fruitful and easily exploited, Shkoder, according to the mission's plans, is to become the center of Albania's synthetic fuel industry (using brown coal and peat).
8. In this connection, it is intended to install the Soviet PIE-47 plant adopted by the Soviet engineer Flechnikov from the American "Hydrokol" system.

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9. According to Soviet calculations, 16,000 tons a year of synthetic gasoline should be obtained in the first stage of production. Negotiations are, however, still proceeding, and no final decision has as yet been reached.
10. The mission has turned down Albanian plans for making a gasoline port of Vlone which was to have been connected by pipe line with the Kucove oil wells. In Soviet opinion, Albanian gasoline is primarily required for local consumption and there is, therefore, no point in building a special port of this kind at Vlone which is in any case very exposed to enemy attack.
11. Port facilities for the amount of oil that is exported can be provided better, the Soviets suggest, at Durres which is less exposed to attack and nearer the capital. Tirana, with its strong aerial defences.
12. The Soviets have accordingly suggested the erection at Durres of a system of gasoline storage tanks, construction of which has already begun. The tanks are to be built near the highways and the projected Durres-Kavaja railroad, and will be concealed by the hills in the vicinity of the fishing village of Arapaj. (Thirty-five percent of the storage tanks will also be built underground.)
13. A decision is to be made during January 1949 on the construction of two oil refineries. Albania is to provide labor, the Soviet supplying material, equipment and technical personnel.
14. It is reported that the main object behind the activities of the petroleum and fuels mission is to insure reserves of gasoline for the Soviet Air Force and Navy operating in Albanian waters in the event of war.
15. Although the behavior of the Albanian population in cities and ports is necessarily correct towards Soviet officers and officials, it is at times distinctly hostile in the villages, and the Soviets are attended by armed guards on all their tours.
16. All Soviet personnel receive their food by special planes from Bulgaria or Hungary. In addition, nine private restaurants have been organized for Soviet officials at Tirana, independent of the large restaurant belonging to the Soviet Legation. In view of the large number of Soviet personnel, housing has also become a problem for the Albanians.

Comment: The fact is stressed that Soviet schemes for the Shkoder production center have nothing in common with earlier Albanian-Yugoslav projects for erecting a plant of this kind at Virpazar.

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